A childhood well-remembered, and with sensitivity

PARADE ON AN EMPTY STREET. by Margaret Drury Gane; Clarke, Irwin & Company Ltd., Toronto; pp. 291; $10.95.

Margaret Drury Gane will be known to some readers through her short stories and feature articles, which have appeared in several well-known Canadian publications. *Parade On an Empty Street* is her first book-length work of fiction. It is an appealing and human story of a childhood remembered.

Keith Gillies, waiting for a business appointment, catches a glimpse of a woman who comes to the door of an office across the hall. She reminds him of a girl who played a brief but special role in his youth; and he reminisces . . .

Keith was eleven years old when Shirley arrives to live with cantankerous old Mrs. Upshaw across the road, creating much speculation on the street as to her identity and adding to the mystery that already surrounded the old lady.

Unnaturally shy and rigidly withdrawn to begin with, the child is not helped by the fact that the old grandmother dresses her in frilly clothes, ribbons and gloves, even for school. It is easy to imagine what the child suffers at the hands of her school fellows; not to mention the punishment meted out by her grandmother when she dares to disobey or shows signs of becoming involved with other children, particularly Keith.

From his vantage point across the road, Keith is at first fascinated. From secretly fantasizing about her, he becomes protective, and eventually tries to develop a friendship — almost an impossibility under the old lady's watchful eyes. It is his boyish endeavors in this area, against Shirley's unresponsiveness and Mrs. Upshaw's vindictiveness, that create troubles for Shirley and Keith, and result in some memorable incidents.

To reflect the thoughts and feelings of an 11-year-old for an adult audience, without making the character either mawkish or unnaturally sophisticated, needs sensitivity and craftsmanship in an author. Margaret Gane has both. Her Keith remains a credible youngster in all his relationships — with Shirley, his peers at school and on the street, and his family.

A poignant thread woven with skill into the fabric of the story is his discovery of a romance between his mother and a visiting unrelated "uncle," and his reaction to the knowledge. *Parade on an Empty Street* is easy and enjoyable reading and whets the appetite for more from this accomplished writer.

P.S. The woman the adult Keith saw across the hall *was* the Shirley of his youth.

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— LILIAN MacLENNAN

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